



STATE OF MICHIGAN

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT & BUDGET  
LANSING

LISA WEBB SHARPE  
DIRECTOR

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Contact: Edward Woods III  
Director of Communications  
(517) 241-8619

## **Austin Building dedication ceremony honors life of Michigan's consummate statesman**

LANSING – As Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm joined in the dedication of the Richard H. Austin Building today, she spoke of the legacy of a secretary of state who set the standards for the office.

"Mr. Austin was so much more than the title of his office suggests," Granholm said. "He was a true statesman in every sense of the word."

The governor joined Austin's family, dignitaries, legislators and his former colleagues at the ceremony. The building, which housed Austin's office during many of his years of service, was renamed for him in November.

Former Attorney General Frank Kelley, a long-time Austin friend and colleague, served as master of ceremonies. Participants included current Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land, State Police Director Col. Tadarial Sturdivant and Austin's widow, Ida Austin.

"Mr. Austin was a man of dedication, integrity and civility who left an indelible mark on Michigan," Land said. "His pioneering work in the areas of traffic safety and voter registration gave us solid platforms on which we continue to build."

Sturdivant also drew attention to Austin's pioneering efforts. "From the moment he took office, Mr. Austin revolutionized the role of the Secretary of State as a lead advocate in traffic safety, incorporating that message in everything the department did."

Austin was Michigan's longest-serving Secretary of State, holding office from 1971 to 1994. He was Michigan's first African-American certified public accountant, statewide officeholder and Secretary of State. He is often called the father of the "motor voter" law, which pairs the voter and driver registration processes. He promoted seat belt and child safety restraint laws, a mandatory motorcycle helmet statute, and measures to address driver education and traffic safety issues. He was a strong

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advocate for Michigan's museum and historical resources and a driving force in efforts to build the Michigan Library and Historical Center. He died April 20, 2001.

Senate Bill 365 (PA 209 of 2005), which was introduced by Sen. Bill Hardiman and signed into law Nov. 17, 2005, renames the state treasury building for the former Secretary of State. The facility houses the Departments of State and Treasury.

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